Central American
NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.
Editor: Michael P. Birks, 36 Trevor Road, Flixton, URMSTON, Manchester M41 5QH. England. 0161-747 5924.

Vol.III, No.57 **October 1994**

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The **Central American Group** is a part of the **Spanish Main Philatelic Society,** the leading Society in the world for collectors of Latin America. The journal of the SMPS is *The Mainsheet*, published quarterly, and is available by annual subscription from the Secretary, Brian Moorhouse, PO Box 105, PETERBOROUGH PE3 8TQ, England. Phone 01733 2687078. Subscription is currently £8 in Europe or $20 elsewhere. Cheques in sterling of US$ should be made payable to "The Spanish Main". A three year subscription of £21/$54 and a five year subscription of £30/$80 are available and payment for these longer subscriptions may be made by Access, Mastercard or Visa.

The **Central American Group** caters for the collectors of Mexico to Panama. Its journal, which you are now reading, is published quarterly, and is available by annual subscription. The subscription is currently £5 in Europe or £7 elsewhere. Cheques in sterling payable to "The CA Group" should be sent to the treasurer, David Hankey, 2 Prince's Drive, Marple, STOCKPORT SK6 6NJ, England. Phone 061-449 0693. We shall be pleased to forward the relevant portions of multi-subscription cheques to the SMPS or the Chile Group.

Back issues are available to members at 75p/$1.50 each, although issues 1-20 inclusive can be purchased for £10/$20 complete. Non-members may request a sample copy for 75p/$1.50 post paid. Requests for back issues should be sent the the Editor, to whom cheques should be made payable.

The group leader is Richard Saundry, Gwrych Cottage, Godstone Road, Bletchingley, REDHILL RH1 4PL, Surrey, England. Phone 01883 742186.

The group does not run a packet. The SMPS Packet Secretary is Brian Sylvester, 3 Russell Court, St Lukes Road, MAIDENHEAD SL6 7AP Berkshire, England. Phone 01628 784555.

Although most packets are of a general nature, there are occasional specialised one country packets. Good and unusual material is always wanted.

Owing to insurance difficulties, the packet is not available to overseas members, although we shall be pleased to accept material for inclusion from them.

The auctioneer of the SMPS is Brian Moorhouse, to whom Auction and Private Treaty lots should be sent. Brian is a dealer, and will include your name on his mailing list if requested to do so.

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EDITORIAL

Once again we come to the end of another year - well as far as your Newsletter subscription is concerned! The date of the next Newsletter will be January 1995 and so we ask you to renew your subscription before Christmas. You will be pleased to note that subscriptions are unchanged. We do however have a new Treasurer, David Hankey, and I would like to thank Colin Eddleston for all the hard work he has done for us over the years. It is a thankless task being treasurer and we are very fortunate to have had two good men in that post, and a third taking over.

May I please remind you that dollar checks cost us £5 to change at the bank, leaving less than £1 for us. Clearly we cannot operate like that and so please bear that in mind when sending your subscription. US societies insist on dollar checks drawn on a US bank and if we are to continue then we must also insist on sterling checks drawn on a British bank or dollar bills which are cheaper to exchange but not free. Your subscription is $12 net.

Unfortunately the proposed meeting at Urmston had to be cancelled because of a poor response. This was a great disappointment to me as I had gone to a lot of trouble to find a new venue. However if the membership is not happy with Manchester as a venue then I can only accede to their wish. I do hope however that this will not be the end of Provincial meetings and that it will not deter others from trying. They can count on my full support.

You will have noticed that the typeface of your journal (and the *Chile News*, which I also type) has changed. This is an attempt by me to come to terms with modern technology and as I am still at the bottom of the learning curve there may be improvements in the future. Suggestions from those experienced in desk top publishing would be helpful. Are newspaper columns easier to read than text right across the page for example?

May I once again ask for copy. I have a little Nicaragua and could probably write more myself, but the rest of the Republics are very much under represented. I have blanket permission to reproduce from other similar journals and so if you know of a piece which is well worth reprinting, or you could update, copyright will not be a problem. Please feel free to contact me to discuss the matter if you feel you can assist.

I was delighted to hear that **John West,** editor of the *Chile News*, has in his words "after 20 years of trying" achieved an International Gold with his Valparaiso postal history. Many congratulations to him. I am always pleased to publish good news like this so please feel free to blow your own trumpet!

And finally, ludicrous though it may sound, this will be my only opportunity to wish you all the very best for the Festive Season. It won't be long now before there are Easter eggs in the shops!

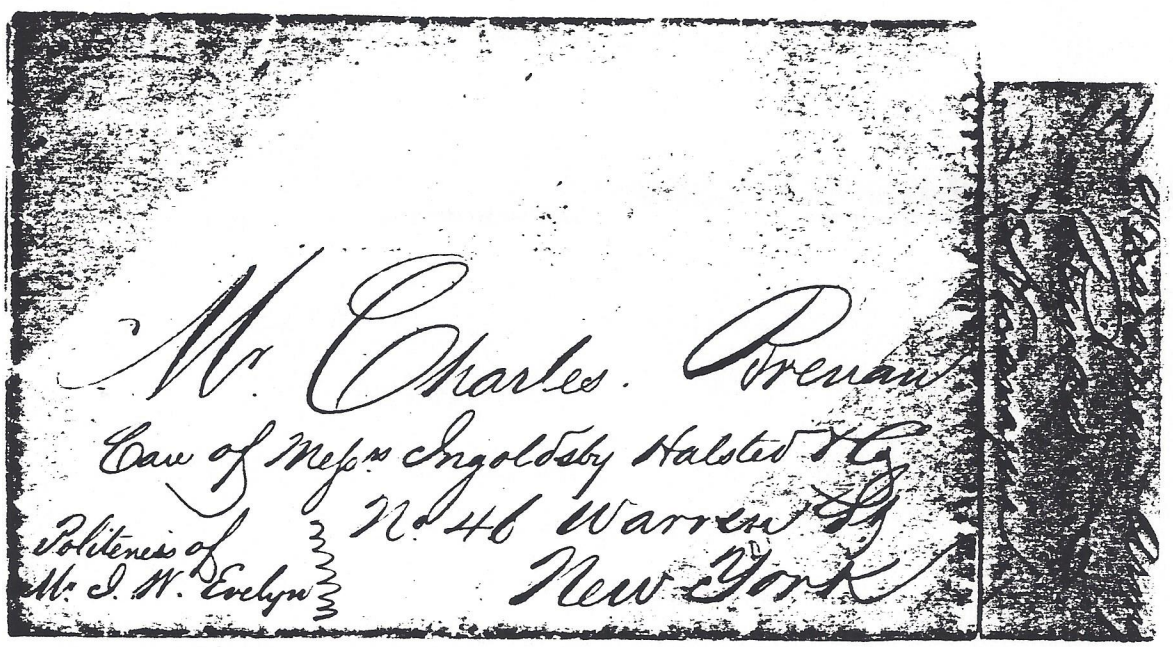
mpb

SOME RATES VIA, FROM AND TO NICARAGUA

by GIANA WAYMAN

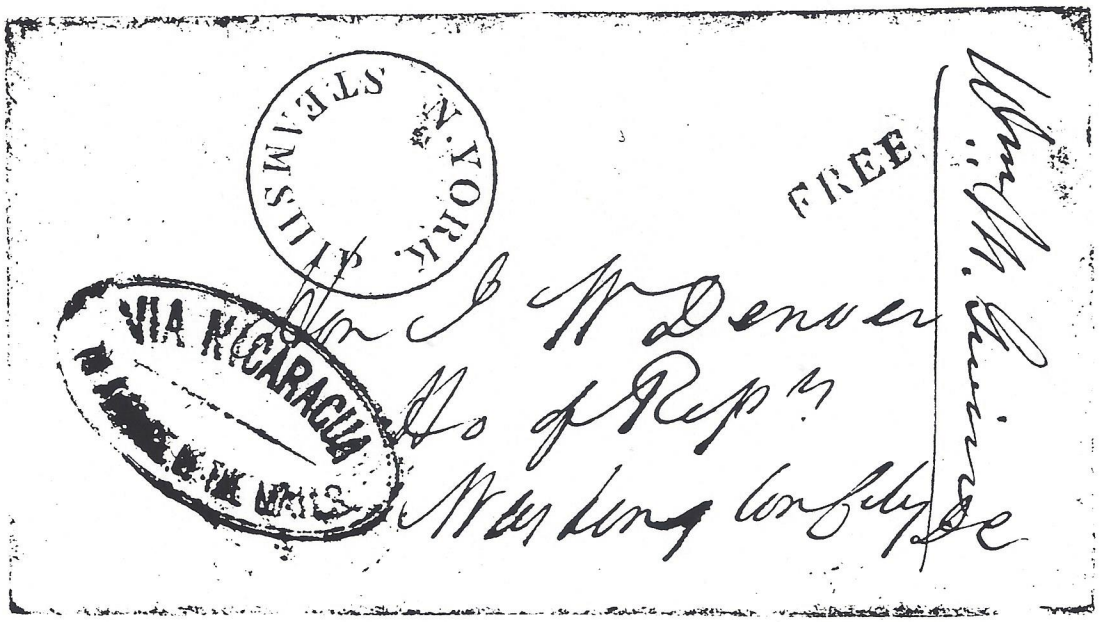
There were many different rates which were applied to Nicaraguan mail during the 1849-57 period. The cover with the 7c rate in the last issue is rare and very interesting, especially with the partial payment and due mark. My only 7c cover, while carried with the "Via Nicaragua" mail is actually from Virgin Bay. I can show a range of covers with rates from nothing to 34c.

The cover below is from a soldier in William Walker's army who got out just before the army was completely encircled at Rivas. Dated Rivas, 1 January 1857, it carries the comment that it is being hand carried by a person leaving on the lake steamer that day. This boat was captured by the Central American forces but passengers were allowed to continue to New York where, according to a hand written note, it was hand delivered before 27 January, thus no postage. This was actually illegal.

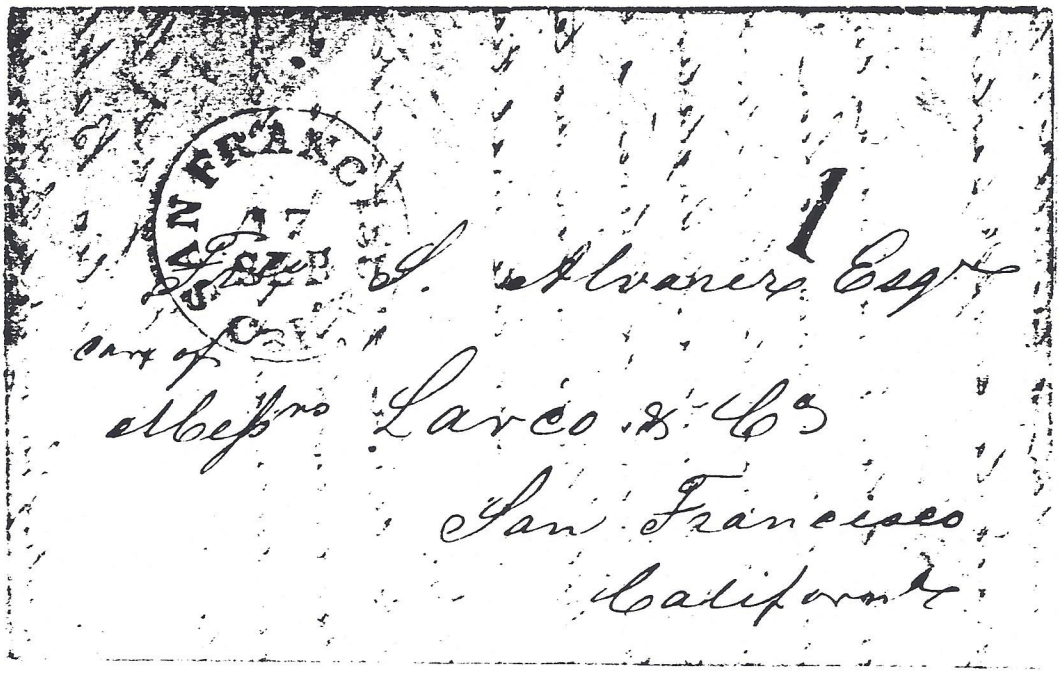


The boat would be the *Tenessee* which arrived in New York on 18 January. Walker was completely blockaded on 3 January and so no more mail left until after his surrender on 1 May. This trip was also the last across Nicaragua by the Transport Company. Three trips were made on each side after this but the passengers were all Walker's volunteers and were turned back. No further trips were made across Nicaragua.

The second cover is from Senator William Gwin using his free frank privilege, and so no postage is payable, and the cover is marked "FREE". The cover is undated, but the mark is known used on covers leaving San Francisco between 16 August 1854 and 26 February 1855. Less than ten covers are known bearing this mark.

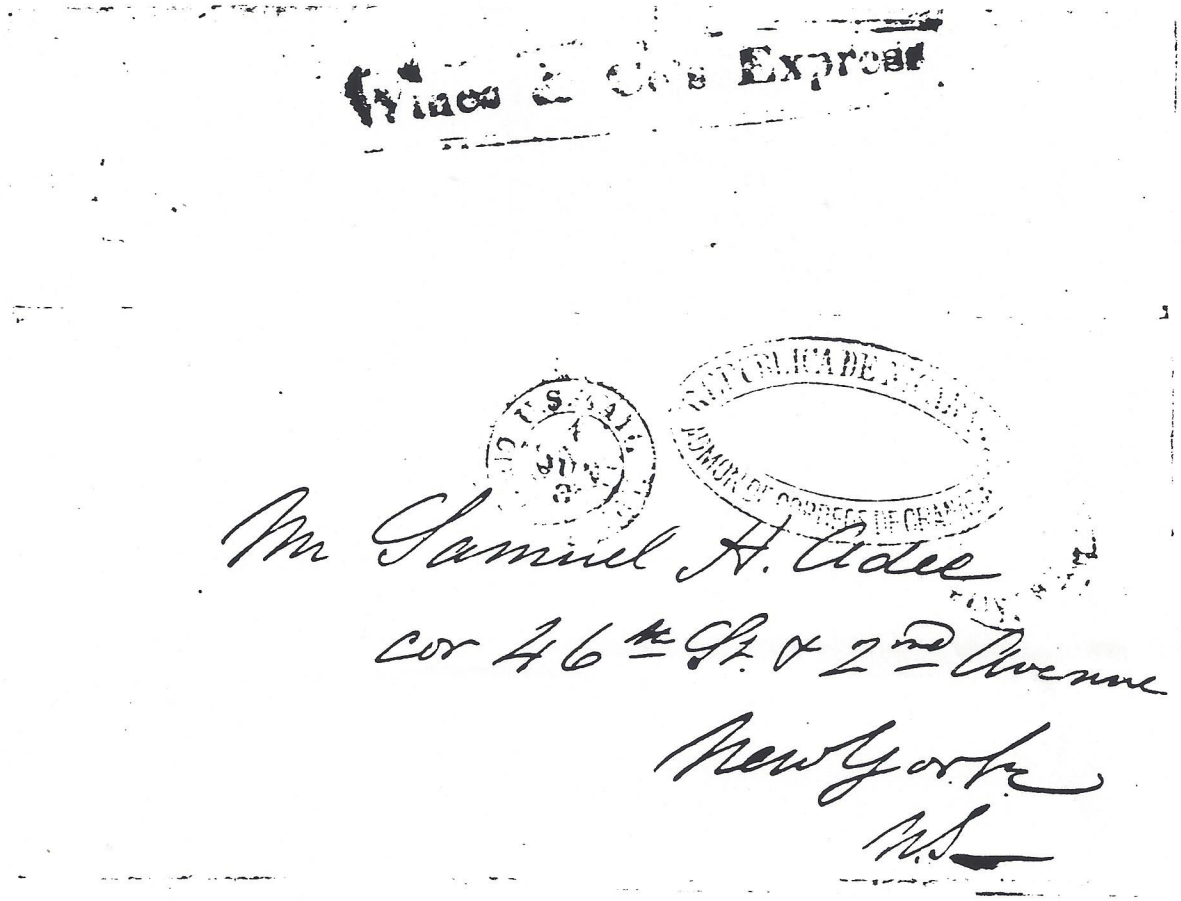


The third cover was written in Chinandega on 19 August 1851 and privately carried to San Juan del Sur, where it was put aboard the *S S Independence*, bound for San Francisco on its first voyage.



In San Francisco the cover was put into a Post Office box for 'City Delivery'. The handstruck '1' denotes a fee of 1c, payable for a drop letter. This was also illegal as it should have been handed in at the port and charged as a ship letter.

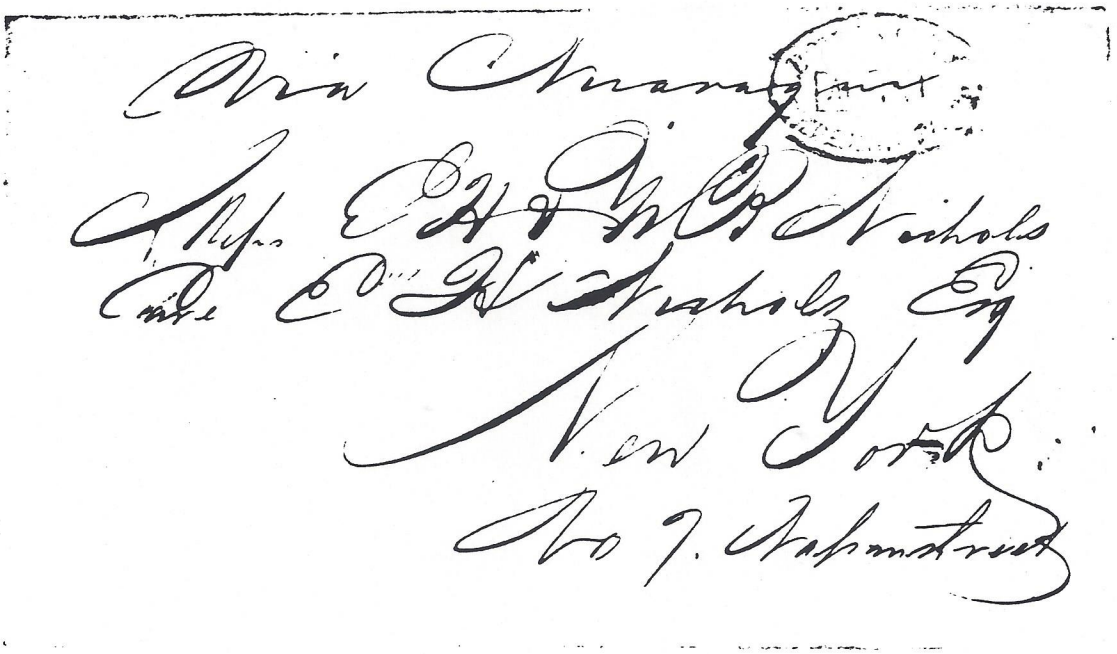
This one I do not understand as it is clearly marked as being from Nicaragua and should have been handed in at the port. Apparently it was also put into a drop box for city delivery as it is also marked '1' for the 1c drop letter charge. Some postal employee must have seen this and should have made the higher ship letter charge.



The letter was written on 1 May 1856 while William Walker controlled most of the country. The writer talks of personal matters to his father and also of the war.

> "After I wrote my first letters from this place, I left almost immediately for the interior of the state .... I hope that the war which has been raging in this country between Costa Rica and ourselves has at last come to a termination. We had what may be called a great battle with the enemy and after completely routing them drove them from the state. So for the present at least the war is ended. The enemy lost in the fight which took place at Rivas some six hundred while Walker only lost 70 men killed and wounded ...."

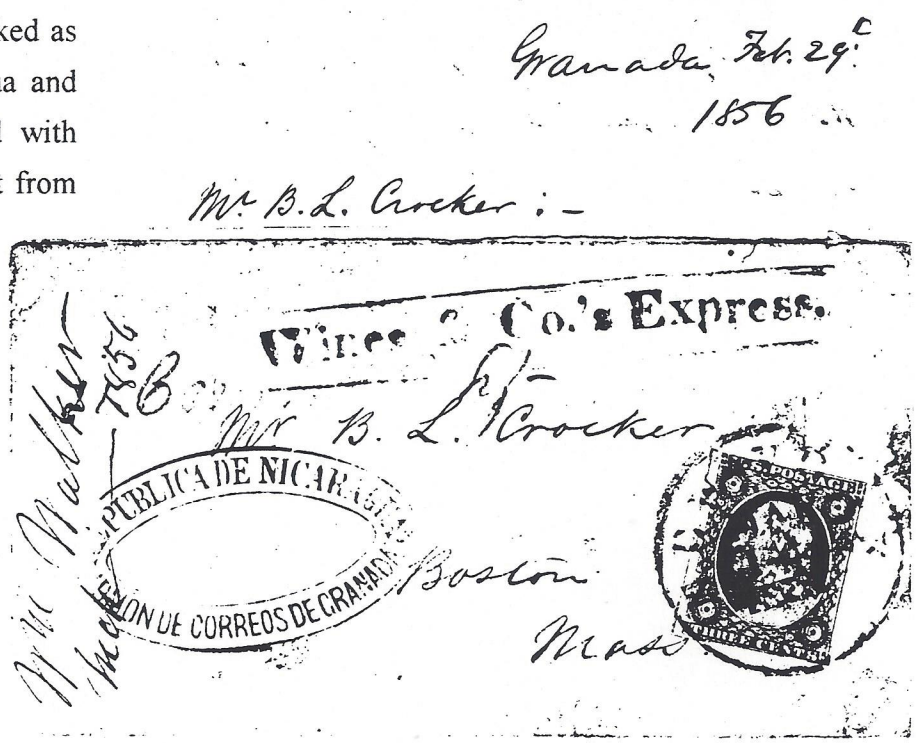
The cover on the next page was also carried outside the mails but was put into the private "Boyd's City Delivery" box where the employee did not have the same obligation to report it.



Being outside the mails the cover bears no postal markings other than the "Boyd's City Express Paid" mark for local delivery. A note on the back, "Enclosure SF Jul 15 1853", tells us the cover must have left San Francisco on the next day on board *Brother Jonathan* and arrived in New York on 9 August aboard the *Star of the West*.

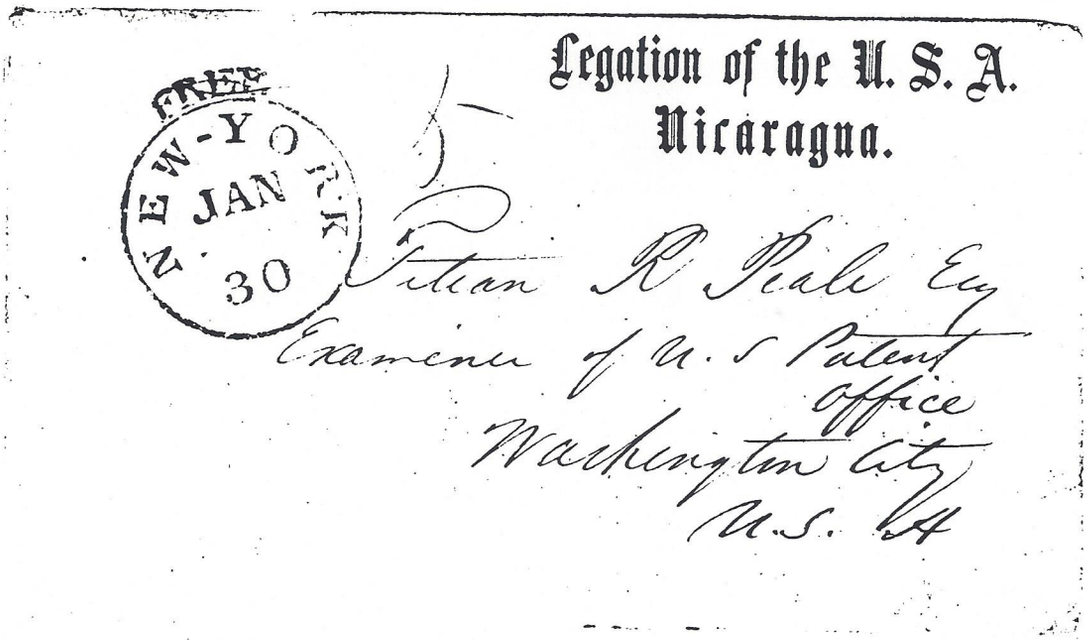
This cover is also clearly marked as having originated in Nicaragua and yet despite this it was accepted with only the 3c postage to carry it from New York to Boston.

Written by Gen. William Walker in Granada on 29 February 1856, it is in praise of a soldier who was killed in Rivas, to his family.



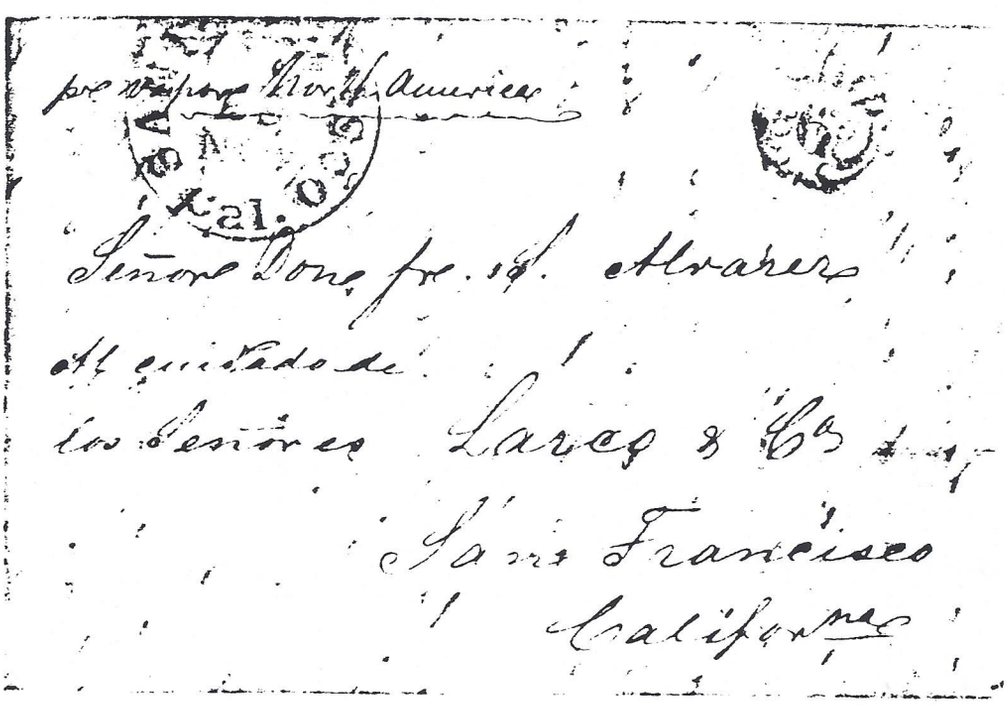
It arrived in New York on 13 March 1856 aboard the *Northern Light*. There is a Boston carrier delivery handstamp on the back.

A cover from the Legation of the United in Nicaragua, normally in Granada, and privately carried at least to San Juan del Norte for onward transmission by the Transit Company.

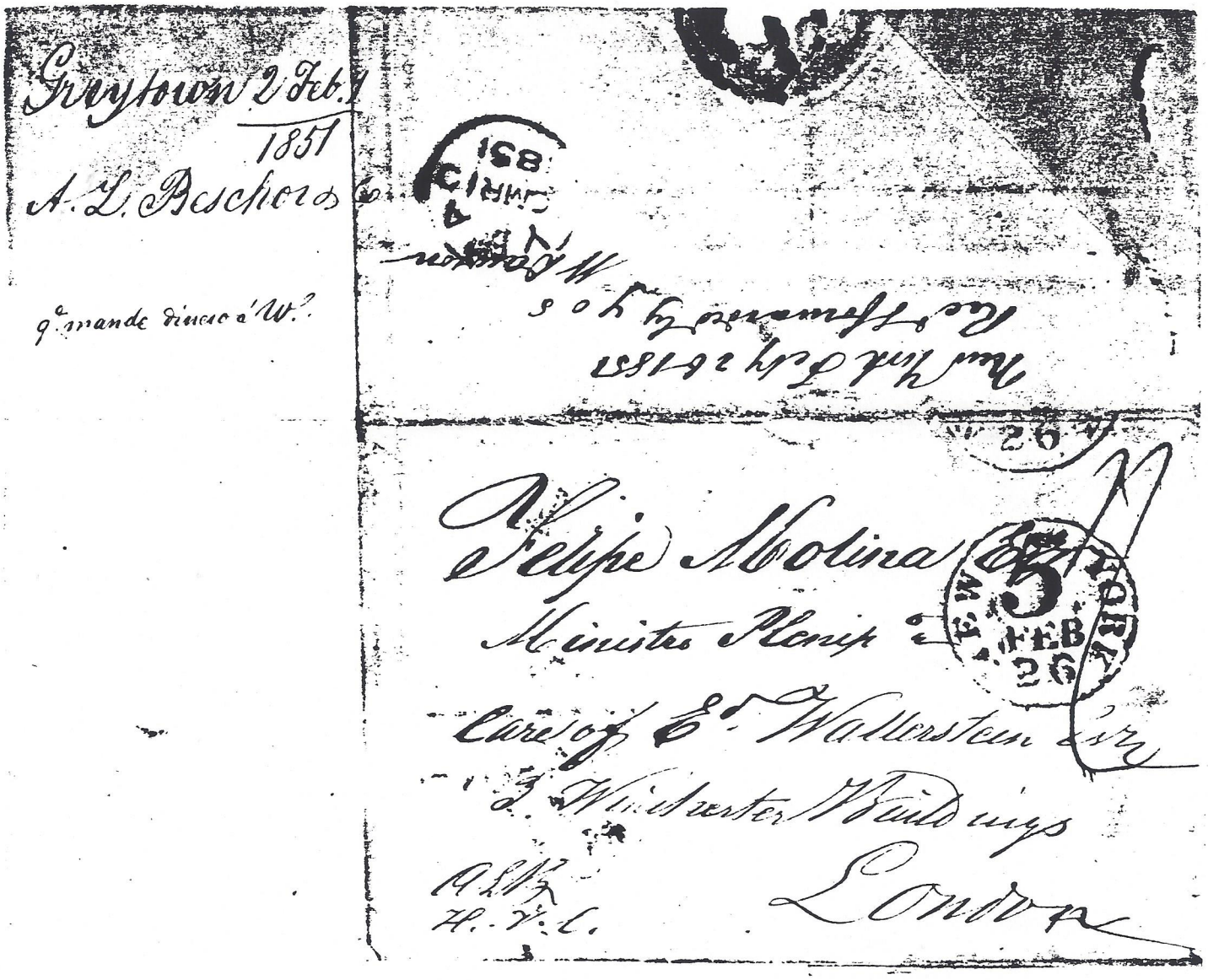


The cover was originally rated as "FREE", but this was later struck out and the cover rated 5c, presumably the normal postage from Washington to New York.

The next cover was written in Chinandega on 4 November 1851, from where it was privately carried to San Juan del Sur. It was carried on the *S S North America*, arriving in San Francisco on 28th, when it was put into the regular mails and charged the regular 6c postage.

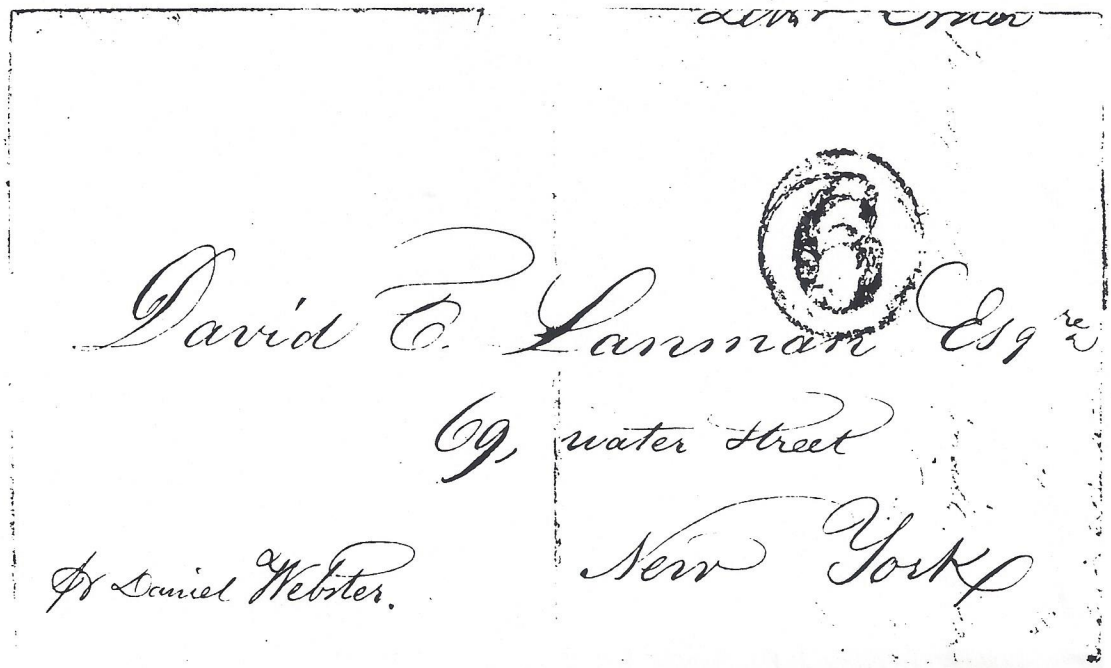


An interesting cover written in Greytown on 2 February 1851, which was received in New York by the forwarding agent W Dawson, on 26th and sent on to London. 5c was the US internal rate. Vanderbilt arrived in New York from Greytown on the 25th and presumably carried this letter. This was an exploratory trip he made in his ocean yacht *Prometheus* and is the first trip of what became the "Accessory Transit Co.", the line for the "via Nicaragua" route during its strongest period. I am not sure if the 5c parking represents the US internal postage or ship rate or US rate New York to London. I presume it is the latter.

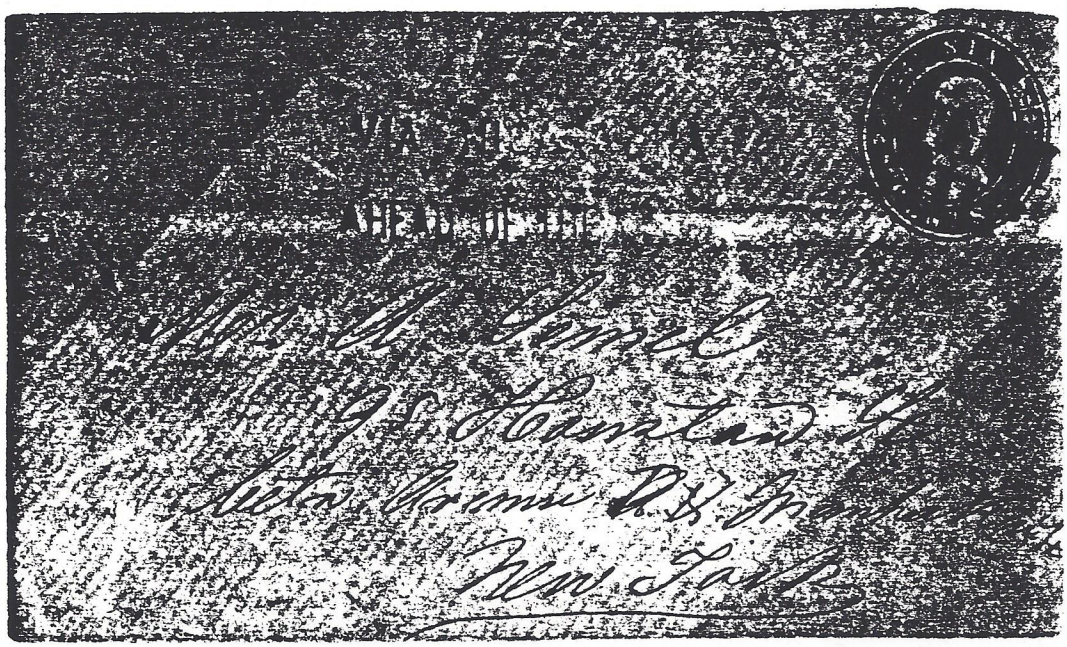


Certain discrepancies lead me to question this explanation. First, the *Prometheus* arrived in New York on 22nd not 25th and it would be most singular if it had taken four days to land the mails. Secondly, the rate from Nicaragua at that time for a letter carried over 300 miles (until 1 July of that year) was ten cents, but this cover was rated five cents. Thirdly, there would have been no need for a forwarding agent had this letter been included with the mails carried on the *Prometheus* and rated correctly as coming from Nicaragua. I would suggest that the letter was carried on a private ship, landing three days after the *Prometheus* and the forwarding agent, W Dawson, carried the mails to the Post Office where the letter was rated five cents, as a ship letter carried privately, hence the "New York 5" marking. It was then put in the transatlantic mails to England where the manuscript marking, top right, denotes a charge of one shilling. Much licence has to be given in interpreting British manuscript markings but this one// very closely resembles 1/-, the rate for a letter across the Atlantic from the Americas, I believe. Your comments would be most welcome. - Ed.

This letter was written in Greytown on 6 November 1851, and marked for the ship *Daniel Webster* which arrived in New York on 16 November with 509 passengers. The 6c charge was for a USA letter from California so mail from Nicaragua was combined with it. postage for a letter carried outside the mails from Nicaragua was 10c.



A cover from San Francisco, m/s 16 January 1854, which arrived in New York on 9 February. Although prepaid 6c the embossed stamp is cancelled "STEAM/SHIP", which would attract a 7c rate if it had been correct. The "VIA NICARAGUA ..." is struck in dull red black.



From 30 June 1851 the rate for a letter over 3,000 miles was 6c if prepaid, 10c if not, hence the 10c rate for outside mail. It was also possible for a letter to be carried with the mails and also charge 10c if not prepaid. Thus it looks as though the letter (top) was prepaid but how if it originated in Nicaragua? - Ed.

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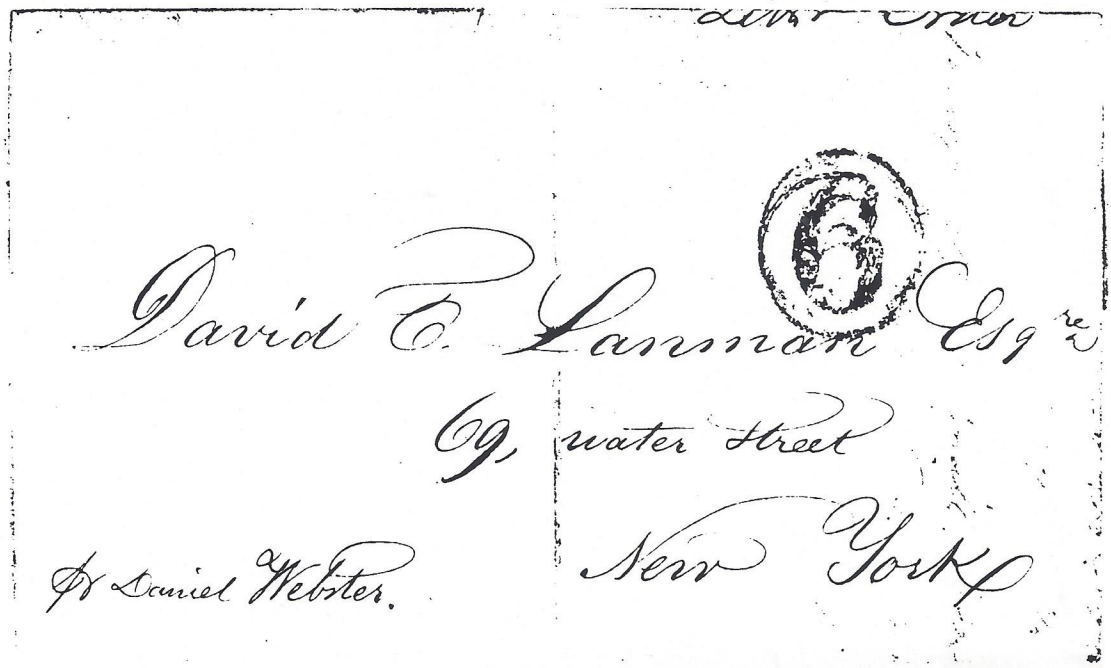

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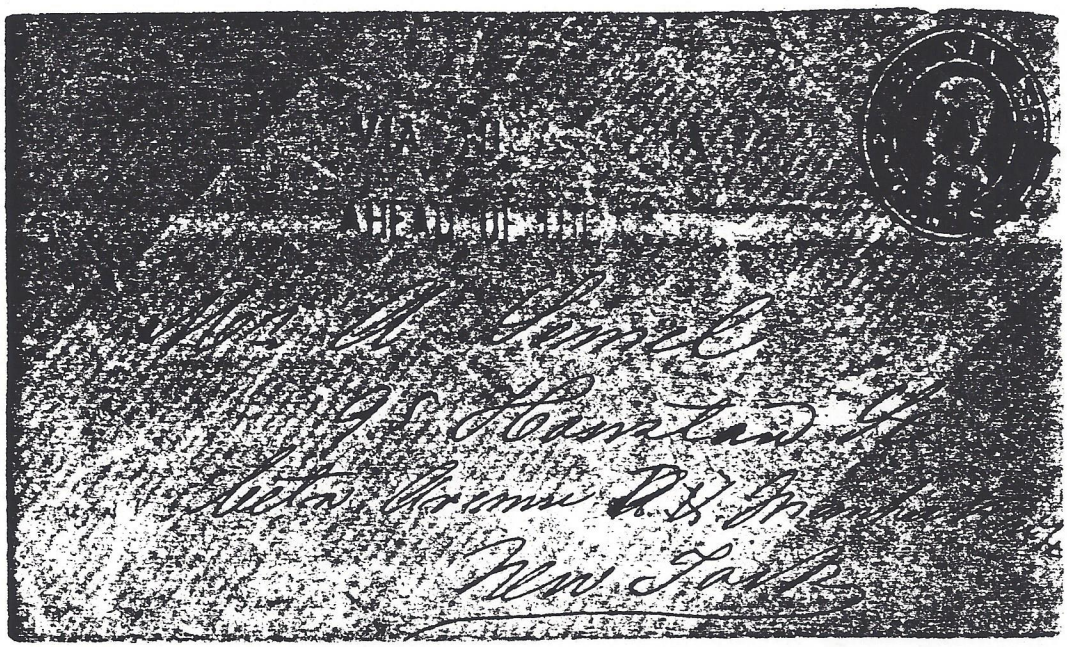

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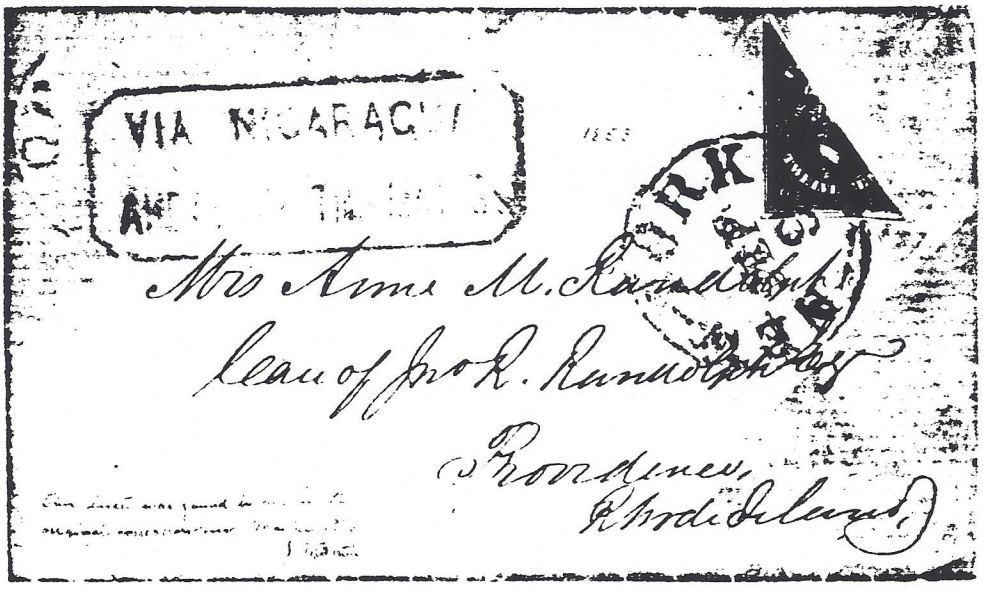
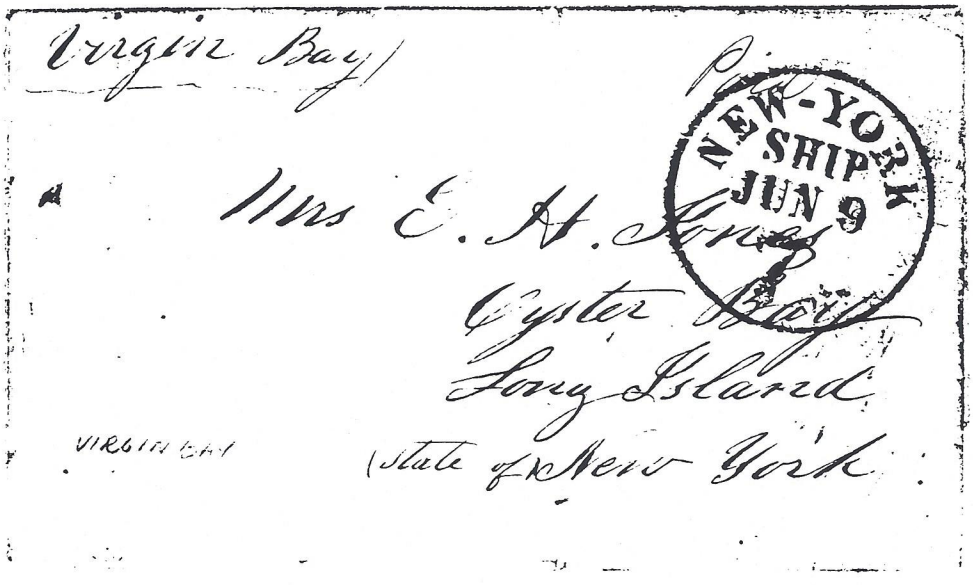
Between July and September of 1853 the supply of 3c stamps became exhausted and the postmaster bisected 12c stamps to pay the 6c rate to the east coast. This cover was sent on 16 August 1853 on the *Sierra Nevada* and arrived in New York on 9 September on the *Star of the West*.



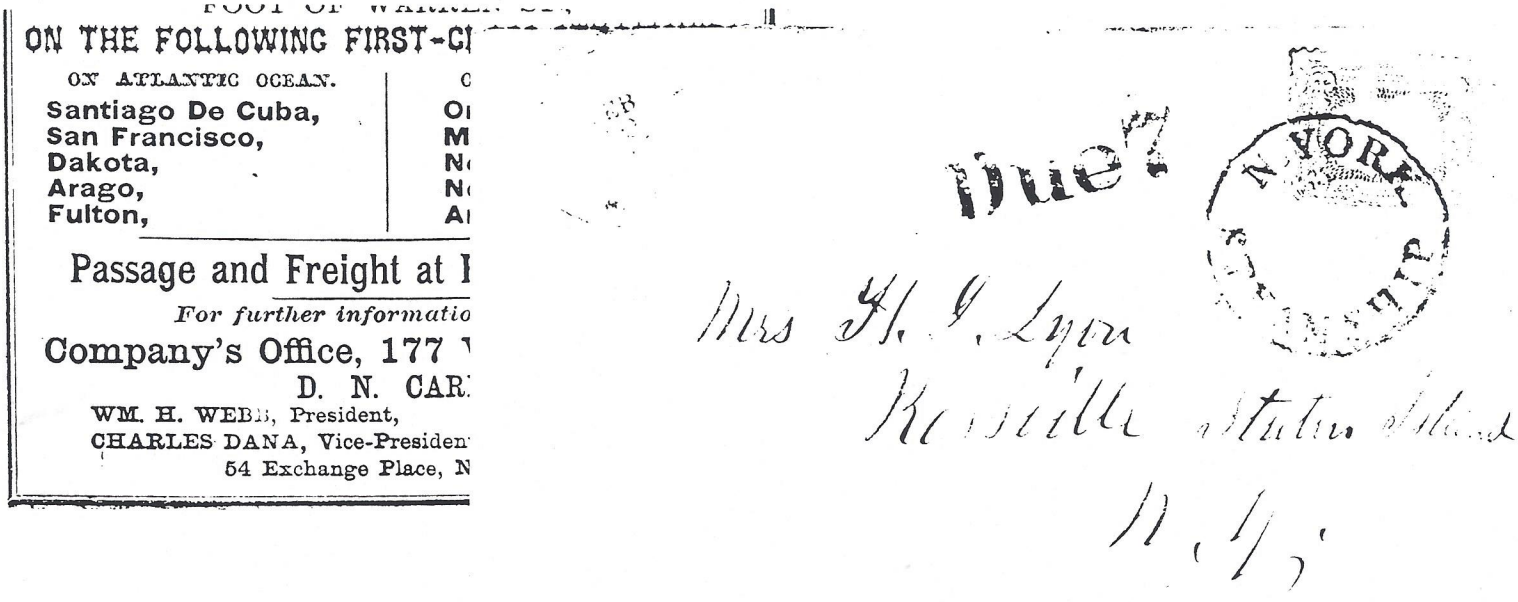
A ship letter correctly rated 7c to include local delivery, written at Virgin Bay on 27 May 1853 by a traveller crossing Nicaragua on his way to the gold fields of California. This was the year when the route was at its peak with 23,957 crossing the isthmus here.



The 7c rate is made up of a 5c ship letter rate plus a further 2c for postage to a point outside the port of entry, in this case Long Island.

The cover below bears a "Via Nicaragua ..." mark struck in black, and is the only reported example. It was cancelled in New York on 9 February 1854 and sent to Bridgeport where it was redirected and charged 3c for forwarding. This 9c rate may be unique.

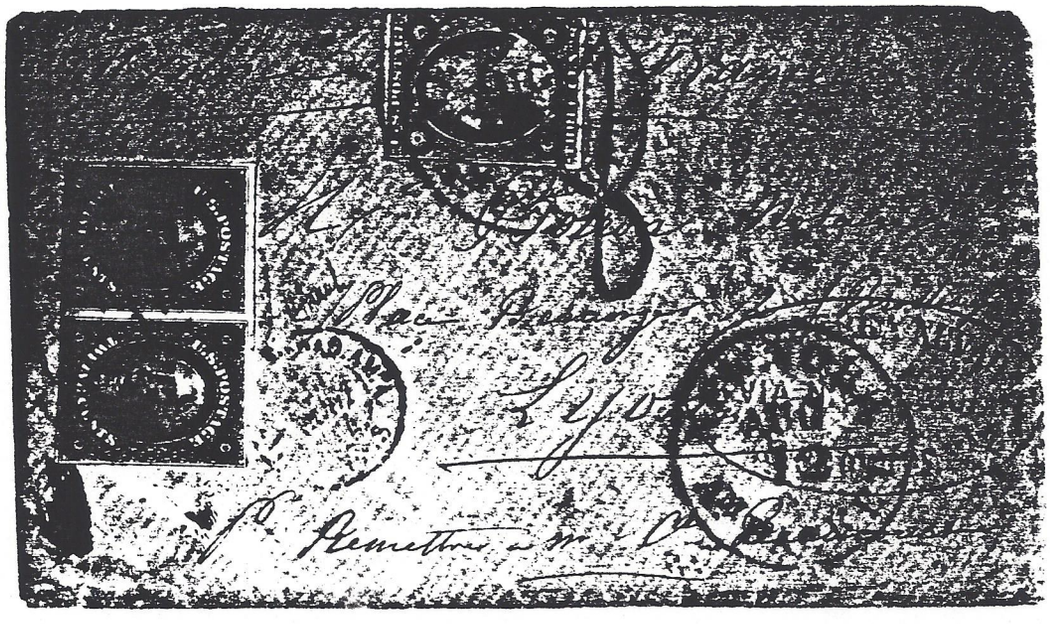
A letter from San Juan del Norte dated 12 February 1867, and arriving in New York on 21 February courtesy of the C.A.T. Co.. The cover is charged at 10c steamship rate as with all examples that I know, made up of 3c prepaid and 7c due. The letter would be correctly franked if it had originated in New York, but the rating clerk knew better.



A cover from the first "Via Nicaragua" trip in 1849. It was written in San Juan 28 march 1849 by a passenger on the first trip who describes the hardships endured.

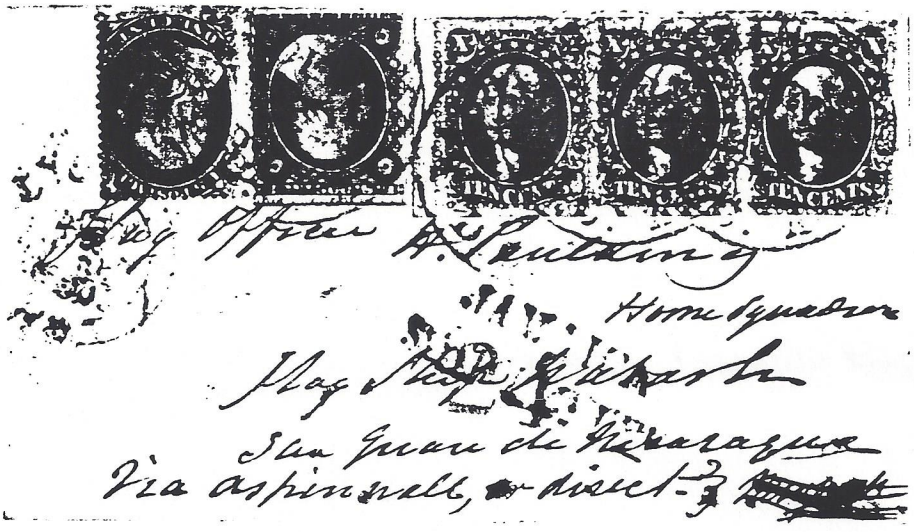
Sent by the sailing ship *Eudora*, the cover entered the US mail system at Galveston, Texas, on 7 May 1849, where it was rated 12c. This is the only reported cover from the first trip.

This cover is the only reported cover from the West Coast via the Nicaragua route, to France. It left San Francisco on 15 July 1854 on the *Sierra Nevada*, arriving in New York on 7 August. In New York it was put on board an American packet bound for New York, five days later, on 12 August. It was rated 6c for trancontinental mail plus a further 20c to France. Thus it is overpaid by 1c.



The previous cover illustrates why there are so few letters to Europe via Nicaragua. It was in transit for 45 days by that route, but if it had gone via Panama, connecting with a French packet, it probably would have arrived in France in a little over 30 days.

And finally, a cover to Nicaragua, via Jamaica. The cover was posted in Washington on 17 December and franked 34c. This rate was a combination of both US and British postage, made up of 10c to be carried by a US ship to a Caribbean port, in this case Kingston, plus 24c paid postage between any two British offices or ports in the Caribbean.



Backstamped Kingston, the cover was carried to San Juan on a non-mail ship, indicated by the two line marking "JAMAICA/SHIP LETTER".

Commodore Pauling was no longer in San Juan del Norte when the letter arrived. On the back is penned "Forwarded from Dan Juan del Norte by your obs. servt. W Johnson Jr.". It was subsequently vcarried by British mail ship to St Thomas were it was backstamped, January 6. It was possibly picked up here by an American ship and taken to New Orleans, which was where Commodore Pauling had taken William Walker. This is the only reported cover connected with Walker's second expedition.

THE RAILWAYS OF CUBA - Part 2

by DR ANTHONY GOODBODY

(Continued from page 318)

Early Locomotives, 1984. (SG 3015-3020)

Another attractive set about which comparatively little is known. Those inscribed F.C.U.H. are United Railways of Havana, while the 2-8-2 on the 30c stamp belonged to the Consolidated Railroads of Cuba, a company incorporated in 1924 and including, among others, the F.C.U.H.

CUBA CORREOS LOCOMOTORAS ANTIGUAS 1
CUBA CORREOS LOCOMOTORAS ANTIGUAS 4
CUBA CORREOS LOCOMOTORAS ANTIGUAS 5
CUBA CORREOS LOCOMOTORAS ANTIGUAS 30
CUBA CORREOS LOCOMOTORAS ANTIGUAS 50
F.C. U.H

Fuller details of two of the locomotives shown in this set have recently come to light.* A photograph of two of the *Pacific* locomotive No.73, as shown on the 4c value appears in Railway Age Magazine for 8 April 1921. It is said to have been designed for express passenger service between Havana and Santiago. Ten of these locomotives were supplied by Baldwin as part of a large export order.

Weight in working order	176,500 lb
Length over buffers	57 ft 2¾ in
Diameter of driving wheels	5 ft 2 in
Cylinders (diam x stroke)	20 x 26 in
Boiler pressure	180 lbs/sq in

Another part of the same order consisted of ten eight-coupled tank locomotives for switching (i.e. shunting) service. One of these is shown on the 50c value.

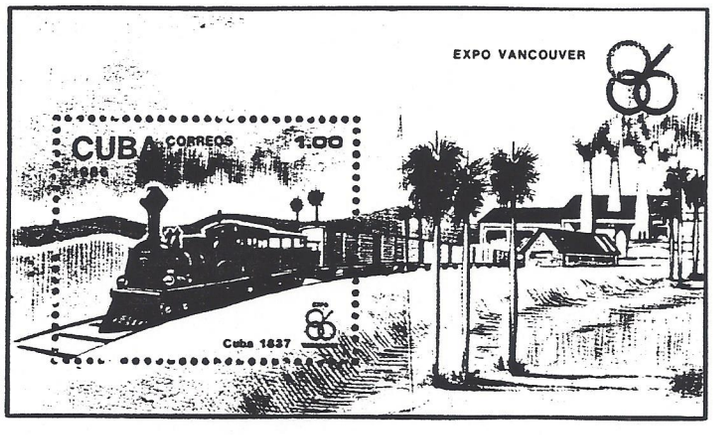
Weight in working order	142,20lb
Length over buffers	
Diameter of driving wheels	3 ft 10 in
Cylinders (diam x stroke)	20 x 24 in
Boiler pressure	180 lbs/sq in

9th National Philatelic Exhibition. (SG MS 3054)
75th Anniversary of the Unification of the Havana-Santiago Railway.

This miniature sheet, which seems to commemorate at least three different events, shows a map of the railway and the same type of locomotive as described under SG 3020 above.

Early Locomotives, 1986. (SG 3173-78, MS 3179)

This set shows six locomotives which have nothing to do with Cuba and will not be described here. Only the miniature sheet has a legitimate subject and this is the locomotive *La Junta* already described under SG 2242.



UPAE Colloquium on American Postage Stamps, 1988. (SG 3346)

'American' type 4-4-0 locomotive on passenger train. It is doubtful whether the locomotive authentic.
(UPAE = Postal Union of the Americas and Spain.)

150th Anniversary of Cuban Railways, 1987. SG 3296-3301, MS 3302)

It is a great pity that on an important occasion like this the Cuban Post Office could do no better than to reproduce previously issued stamps showing locomotives, all of which have been described above. The 1p miniature sheet shows in the margin a further selection of mail guard and travelling post office marks.

Railway Development, 1988. (SG 3296-3301, MS 3302)

The 20c and 30c values show non-Cuban locomotives, while the 50c value shows yet another view of *La Junta.* The 1p value shows a typical US type 'interurban' car. Such cars ran in Cuba and after the period of US influence. A photograph (Railway Age, February 1920) shows one on the line from Havana to Guines (see introduction). This line was part of the electrified Havana Central Railroad, a subsidiary of the United Railways of Havana. The 2p value shows a Russian type M-62K described above under SG 2246, while the 5p value shows a modern railcar.

Stamp Day, 1990

The design is taken from a mural by R R Radillo in the Ministry of Communications. The artist has taken for his model the Russian type TEM-1 diesel electric locomotive (see SG 1313) hauling a train of silver cars. The location is uncertain but it is possible that the twin towers in the background are meant to represent the towers of Havana Station (see SG 357

25th Anniversary of the Cuban Postal Museum, 1990.

A line of old railway vehicles, with an inscription ("Cuban railway post"), which implies that they may be travelling post offices. However they do not look like TPO's.

30th Anniversary of Nationalisation of Cuban Railways, 1990.

As stated in the Introduction, the Cuban railway system is now operated by the Cuba National Railways. The issue of this stamp implies that nationalisation took place in 1960 but I have no independent confirmation of this fact. The stamp is attractive and shows in the background an authentic view of 2-6-0 locomotive No. 1712, details of which are unfortunately lacking.

* Kindly provided by the Colorado Railroad Museum archives via Robert G Munshower, Jr.

WANTED!

Contributions for the next edition

Please send your letters, articles, news and other pertinent information to The Editor.